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Chaucerian Synthesis: the Art of The Kingis Quair

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> Lady Philosophy: "Thou has bytaken thiself to the governaunce of Fortune and forthi it byhoveth the to ben obeisaunt to the maneris of thi lady."
>
> Chaucer's *Boece,* II, prose 1.[1]

What is most striking about Chaucer's rendering of Boethius's "Forntunae te regendum dedisti; dominae moribus oportet obtemperes"[2] is its palpable courtliness—"it behoveth the to ben obeisaunt to the maneris of thi lady"—, a quality alien to the intent, if not the sense, of the original.[3] Manipulation of this kind characterizes Chaucer's use of Boethius in his poetry, most of the famous Boethian passages occurring in an explicitly courtly context.[4] Similarly, *The Kingis Quair* utilizes Boethian elements, especially the Boethian concept of Fortune, in combination with courtly material based on the *Knight's Tale.* The situation itself is quite simple: lamenting his unjust incarceration, the prisoner sees a beautiful lady, is immediately stricken with love for her, and complains with renewed vigor of his imprisonment. We have here the potential for effective poetry in the movement from general to specific despair and the counter movement from literal to metaphorical confinement; i.e., the desire for freedom generally becomes a specific desire for access to the lady, and, at the same time, the literal thralldom of the prisoner is amplified to include the freely-chosen

1. This and all future textual references are to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957).

2. *Boethius: The Consolidation of Philosophy,* ed. and trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London and New York, 1926), p. 177. All references are to this edition.

3. It is pointless to argue that other translations render "domina" as "lady," since for a 14th-century audience the connotations of "lady" in the context in which it appears would be no more innocent than "mistress" would be to a 20th-century audience.

4. E.g., in *Troilus and Criseyde* and in the *Knight's Tale.* Notable exceptions are the passages in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* in which the usual Boethian questions are raised for comic purposes. For a list of the relevant passages, see B. L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the "Consolation of Philosophy"* (New York, 1965), pp. 137-40; 142-43; 145.

thralldom which the courtly lover assumes for the sake of his beloved.[5] The very fact of imprisonment makes the situation, at least nominally, Boethian; the presence of the lady establishes the courtly context; the dream-vision episode introduces Macrobian elements, and the overall treatment is typically Chaucerian. It will be my purpose in this essay to examine in turn each of these aspects of *The Kingis Quair* in order to demonstrate the skillful way in which the poet, by synthesizing diverse traditional materials, has produced a coherent and extremely well-constructed poem.

(i) THE BOETHIAN SITUATION

There is not to my knowledge any recent critic of *The Kingis Quair* who does not recognize, or at least claim to recognize, the pervasive influence of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy.* John MacQueen considers the *Consolation* to be "perhaps the main controlling factor in the narrative of the *Quair*,"[6] and Mary Rohrberger goes so far as to call the poem, James I's "Consolation of Philosophy."[7] The influence of the *Consolation* is noted by John Preston[8] and by M. F. Markland who sees Fortune as the subject of the poem,[9] a view judiciously modified by MacQueen: "Fortune in isolation . . . is not the central subject of the poem, but rather Fortune in the context of divine government as a whole."[10] James himself gives us good reason to seek out Boethian echoes in *The Kingis Quair;* the book which prompts his musings is

5. A somewhat different view is given by Andrew Von Hendy, "The Free Thrall: A Study of *The Kingis Quair*," *SSL,* II, (1964-65), 141-51, to whose essay I am nonetheless indebted. He says, "the speaker discovers by stages that his lady is indeed Cupid's princess come to free him, the goddess of nature and an agent of Providence" (p. 144).

6. "Tradition and the Interpretation of the *Kingis Quair*," *RES,* NS XII (1961), 117-31. P. 118.

7. "*The Kingis Quair:* An Evaluation," *TSLL,* II (1960), 292-302. Pp. 301-02. At this point let me explain that although I refer to the author as "James" I do so only for the sake of convenience. In spite of all the *post-factum* arguments intended to prove his authorship—see, for example, W. A. Craigie, "The Language of the *Kingis Quair*," *E&S,* XXV (1939: collected 1940), 22-38—the fact remains that the attribution of *The Kingis Quair* to King James I of Scotland rests upon a single, and not wholly trustworthy, manuscript ascription.

8. " 'Fortunys Exiltree': A Study of *The Kingis Quair*," *RES* NS VII (1956), 339-47.

9. "The Structure of *The Kingis Quair*," *Research Studies of the College of Washington,* XXV (1957), 273-86. P. 274.

10. P. 120.

Boethius's *Consolation* (stanzas 3-4)[11] which, he suggests, he has read in Latin (st. 7). His brief summary of the *Consolation* is illuminating: after suffering reversals at the hands of Fortune (st. 3), Boethius took comfort in philosophy (st. 4) and "in him-self the full recover wan/ Off his Infortune, poverti and distresse,/ And in tham set his verray sekernese" (st. 5). The description ends as follows:

> And so the vertew of his zouth before
> Was in his age the ground of his delytis:
> Fortune the bak him turnyt, and therfore
> He maketh Ioye and confort, that quit is
> Off this unsekir warldis appetitis;
> And so aworth he takith his penance,
> And of his vertew maid It suffisaunce[.] (st. 6)

In Boethius's fall from "wele to wo," a descent which is checked by Philosophy in the *Consolation,* we see what comes to be identified as the typical medieval view of tragedy, a view explicitly stated in Philosophy's question: "Quid tragoediarum clamor aliud deflet nisi indiscreto ictu fortunam felicia regna vertentem?"[12] But the point of the *Consolation,* as *The Kingis Quair* tells us, is that a state of felicity more nearly permanent than any based upon Fortune alone can be "recovered" by the individual who allows himself to be ruled by Philosophy. The structure of Boethius's life as it is described in the *Consolation* then is roughly circular, wele to wo to wele, a description which applies even more forcefully to the narrator of *The Kingis Quair;* as Von Hendy says, "the free thrall concludes where he began; the first line of his narrative is the last, and it recalls the paradox of human fate suggested by the stars."[13]

The first two lines of stanza six provide the impetus for the narrator's thoughts concerning his own youth which, as we might expect, he describes in Boethian terms. For him, as for Chaucer's Troilus, Palamon, and Arcite, youth is the time when man is most likely to come under Fortune's sway:

> So uncouthly hir werdes sche [i.e., Fortune] devidith,

11. Unless otherwise indicated, all textual references are to *"The Kingis Quair" Together With "A Ballad of Good Counsel,"* ed. W. W. Skeat, *STS,* NS 1 (Edinburgh and London, 1911).

12. II, prose 2, p. 180. Chaucer adds the gloss, "Tragedeye is to seyn a dite of a prosperite for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse."

13. P. 151. The line referred to is, "Heigh In the hevynnis figure circulere" (l. 1)—the repetition of the word "circulere" is worthy of notice—which reappears at the end of st. 196. Von Hendy attributes the circularity of the poem to "the poet's realization that all things are encircled in the golden chain of love" (p. 151), but the golden chain is merely one aspect of the system described in the *Consolation.*

Namly in ȝouth, that seildin ought providith. (st. 9)

As is typical of the narrative movement in *The Kingis Quair,* this general reflection leads the narrator into autobiographical revelation—

> Among thir thoughtis rolling to and fro,
> Fell me to mynd of my fortune and ure;
> In tendyr ȝouth how sche was first my fo,
> And eft my frende, and how I gat recure
> Off my distresse, and all myn aventure
> I gan oure-hayle. . . . (st. 10)

—which in turn produces the apostrophe to youth in general and to his own youth in particular:

> Thou [sely] ȝouth, of nature Indigest,
> Unrypit fruyte with windis variable;
> Like to the bird that fed is on the nest
> And can noght flee; of wit wayke and unstable,
> To fortune both and to Infortune hable;
> Wist thou thy payne to cum and thy travaille,
> For sorow and drede wele myght thou wepe and waille. (st. 14)

This stanza, it should be noted, begins the poem proper, and it is significant that the apostrophe to youth is so conspicuously placed, since what follows (st. 15-17) is an extended simile in which the youth subject to fortune is compared to a rudderless boat and in which the concept of freedom and the related Boethian concept of free will are implicitly called into question.

The narrator begins by establishing the point of contact, i.e., "unsekerness," between the two things being compared (st. 15). In the case of the young man, "unsekernesse" causes him to drift aimlessly, a fit subject for Fortune; in the case of "the schip that sailith stereles," "unsekernesse" may cause the vessel to come "Upon the rok[kis] most to harmes hye." The rhetorical structure of the stanza, "Thus stant thy confort . . . Ryght as the schip . . . So standis thou here" exhibits in microcosm the circularity of the poem as a whole. More importantly, however, it answers perfectly to the sense, as like the rudderless boat and the free but aimless young man, it drifts, from assertion to metaphorical explication and back again to assertion. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, I should also like to note here the propriety of this circular structure in the context of Fortune and her "tolter quhele" (st. 9) which has just been the center of attention.

In stanza 16, the simile becomes metaphor. No longer is the young man merely *like* the rudderless boat, he *is* the "schip . . . stereles":

> I mene this by my-self, as In partye;
> Though nature gave me suffisaunce In ȝouth,

> The rypenesse of resoun lak[it] I,
> To governe with my will; so lyte I couth,
> Quhen stereles to travaile I begouth,
> Amang the waives of this world to drive;
> And how the case, anon I will discrive.

The internalization of the comparison enables the narrator once again to move from a general statement to a specific instance of it, i.e., his own youth. The next stanza (17) amplifies the metaphor by reintroducing in this subjective context most of the elements which had been part of the original simile:

> With doutfill hert, amang the rokkis blake,
> My feble bote full fast to stere and rowe,
> Helples allone, the wynter nyght I wake,
> To wayte the wynd that furthward suld me throwe.
> O empti saile! quhare is the wynd suld blowe
> Me to the port, quhar gynneth all my game?
> Help, Calyope, and wynd, in Marye name!

Quite suddenly, and without warning, the frame of reference has been completely changed. Gone are Fortune and the young man; in their place is the ubiquitous flotsam of medieval exigesis:

> The rokkis clepe I the prolixitee
> Off doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall:
> The lak of wynd is the deficultee
> In enditing of this lytill tretys small:
> The bote I clepe the mater hole of all:
> My wit, unto the saile that now I wynd,
> To seke connyng, though I bot lytell fynd. (st. 18)

What have become of Fortune and youth? In the movement from simile to metaphor to allegory they have been abandoned for the purpose of parody. "The prolixitee of doubilnesse," i.e., the wordiness occasioned by the original comparison, has caused the poem, like the aimless youth and the rudderless boat, to drift, and the poet here establishes his intention to regain control of "The bote," i.e., "the mater hole of all." The extended comparison has driven the boat-poem perilously close to the rocks of mere verbiage, and the "lak of wynd," i.e., of inspiration both in the literal and figurative senses, has emptied the sail, i.e., has dulled his wit and his will to continue "this lytill tretys small." Thus, the plea in the previous stanza to Calliope for wind, or inspiration, and the reference to "wynter night" in the same stanza which suggests that the poet intends to return to his present task of writing the poem.

Calling attention to one's poetical shortcomings, as the poet has done here, may be merely a sign of incompetence; he can, after all, rewrite, or delete altogether, the passage in question. The situation

under discussion, however, is radically different. The comparison, at least initially, is handled with consummate skill, and there is certainly no suggestion of incompetence in the movement from simile to metaphor. I believe that it is precisely the excellence of stanzas 15 and 16 which accounts both for the poet's dilemma and his unique method of solving it. In terms of their immediate context as well as their relationship to the poem as a whole, these two stanzas are simply too good to be cast aside; on the other hand, the poet realizes that he can bring the comparison to its logical, but unfortunately allegorical, conclusion only at the expense of the forward movement of the narrative. Therefore, in a stroke of brilliance, he manages to solve his problem by stating it; that is, he retains the allegorical form towards which the comparison has led him, but, at the same time, changes the allegorical significance of each element in the comparison. That there has been no preparation for these changes is exactly the point of the parody, their arbitrary nature emphasizing the point which Chaucer makes so effectively in his use of multiple morals at the end of the *Nun's Priest's Tale:*[14] namely, that in symbol allegory[15] the relationship between the signifier and the thing signified is rarely more than gratuitously apparent, and is in fact perceived at all only because the author explicitly states it. Having simultaneously explained the allegory and stated the poetic problem related to it, the poet is free of both and is able, once again, to begin his narrative. And this is precisely what he does in stanza 19.

Before leaving our discussion of these stanzas, we have one additional factor to consider,[16] a factor which will help to explain the poet's reluctance to eliminate them. At the very beginning of his extended comparison, James had briefly compared the aimless youth with "the bird that fed is on the nest,/And can noght flee" because of its "wit wayke and unstable" (st. 14), perhaps a fore-shadowing of the prisoner's lament in which he complains that he is denied the freedom granted to the birds he sees from his window. Similarly, the youth-rudderless boat comparison may be interpreted as preparing us psychologically for the capture of the narrator while on board a ship (st. 24). But these correspondences, although they impart a kind of casual relevance to the young man-rudderless boat stanzas, are essentially trivial; of much greater significance is the relationship of the com-

14. See my essay, "Chaucer's Anti-fable: *Reductio ad absurdum* in the *Nun's Priest's Tale,*" forthcoming in *Leeds Studies in English* (1971).

15. As opposed to personification allegory. See R. W. Frank's illuminating essay, "The Art of Reading Medieval Personification-Allegory," *ELH,* XX (1953), 237-50.

16. The relationship between these stanzas and similar passages in *Troilus and Criseyde* will be discussed in part 4 of this essay.

parison to the central Boethian situation of exile and imprisonment, and, as MacQueen puts it, of "the unconditional and happy acceptance by the individual of his place in an ordered universe that is Christian. . . ."[17]

If we examine the image of the rudderless boat, we see that it, like the aimless young man, enjoys a kind of freedom which is utterly useless. There is neither control nor direction; the boat and the youth simply drift. (When the simile becomes metaphor and the youth and the boat are one, it is interesting to note that in the literal description of the boarding on the high seas, both the young man and the boat are taken into custody, as though the poet could not forebear from retaining the identity of the two until the last possible moment.) When the metaphorical young man turns finally and irrevocably into the narrator as a youth, and when he is captured and imprisoned, he predictably enough laments the circumscription of his freedom and asks that it be restored to him. But his imprisonment is really no more grievous a hardship than his earlier freedom had been a benefit. It is only after he is smitten with love for the young woman whom he sees walking in the garden, that his plea for freedom takes on substance. Now he has a specific reason for desiring his freedom; i.e., he has acquired at least a modicum of "The rypenesse of resoun" (st. 16) which he had earlier lacked.

It does not require more than a passing acquaintance with *The Consolation of Philosophy* to recognize implicit in the poet's treatment of freedom and imprisonment the Boethian problem of free will as opposed to foreordination. How, Boethius asks, can man's free will operate within the context of God's foreknowledge? Philosophy's answer is clear and to the point:

> Atque deus ea futura quae ex arbitrii libertate
> proveniunt praesentia contuetur. Haec igitur
> ad intuitum relata divinum necessaria fiant per
> condicionem divina notionis; per se vero considerata
> ab absoluta naturae suae libertate non desinunt.[18]

Earlier discussions of this problem, Chaucer's for example, had concentrated on *volentia,* whereas James in the youth-boat comparison and in the prison scenes focuses on *libertas,* his point being that freedom is worthless without "governaunce." The forms which this "governaunce" ought to take are suggested, but not imposed, in the course of the poem by the narrator's advisers, Venus, Minerva, and Fortune. And it is his desire for governance which makes him receptive to

17. P. 131.

18. V, prose vi, p. 406.

their suggestions, just as Boethius's desire for governance enables him to accept the consolation which Philosophy brings.

Like Boethius, the narrator of *The Kingis Quair* is imprisoned unjustly, bemoans his fate, and, as Miss Rohrberger says, "moves from conditions of despair to optimism, from doubt to faith, from questioning to acceptance."[19] With the appearance of the young woman, the narrator realizes that *libertas* and "governaunce" are, in fact, not the mutually exclusive contraries he had thought them to be, and this realization is to be affirmed in the conversations with the three goddesses.[20]

The first of these dialogues proves inconclusive. Venus suggests that he place himself under her governance—"Abyde, and serve, and lat gude hope the gye" (st. 106),—but informs him that she alone cannot help him:

> . . . now thy mater so in balance hangith,
> That it requirith, to thy sekernesse,
> The help of othir mo that bene goddes,
> And have In thame the menes and the lore,
> In this matere to schorten with thy sore. (st. 111)

She thereupon says that she will send him to Minerva and suggests that he "hir hestis wele conserve" (st. 112). That the narrator seeks counsel of Venus before being sent to Minerva is highly appropriate. He is as yet uncertain as to which deity actually has the "governaunce" of his own situation, and Venus seems to him, as she does to Palamon and Troilus, the external agency whose assistance would be most useful, *prima facie.*

As has often been noted, the narrator's conversation with Minerva, whom MacQueen perceptively identifies with Philosophy in the *Consolation,*[21] is the most explicitly Boethian section of the poem. Minerva's chief porter is Patience (st. 125), the point being that the narrator cannot gain access to wisdom without first making the acquaintance of patience, a quality in which he has heretofore been lacking. Before giving her advice, Minerva makes a point of telling the narrator that he is free to reject it and can even refuse to hear it: "And gif thou durst unto that way enclyne [i.e., unto "grete worschip and prise"]/I

19. P. 295.

20. The reason for the realization is the introduction of courtly elements which amplify the Boethian situation, a matter which we will take up in some detail shortly. Suffice it to say at this point that the narrator's statement, "my hert became hir thrall/For ever of free will" (st. 41), indicates, among other things, his sudden awareness of the nature of *libertas,* the importance of governance, and the paradoxical relationship of the two.

21. P. 121.

will the geve my lore and disciplyne" (st. 128; cf. st. 138). She continues:

> Tak him before In all thy governaunce,
> That in his hand the stere has of ȝou all,
> And pray unto his hye purveyance,
> Thy lufe to gye, and on him traist and call,
> That corner-stone and ground is of the wall,
> That failis noght, and trust, withoutin drede,
> Unto thy purpose sone he sall the lede. (st. 130)

The young man-rudderless boat comparison is here brought to a conclusion. If the narrator will voluntarily allow himself to be guided by Him "That in his hand the stere has of ȝou all," he will immediately be led "Unto thy purpose."[22] Minerva goes on to extol the virtues of patience and the importance of joining wisdom and will (st. 133). After hearing the narrator's plea, Minerva tells him that she "will [hir] pray full faire,/That fortune be no more thereto contraire" (st. 140); the mention of Fortune provides Minerva with an opportunity to explain, in patently Boethian terms, the function of that goddess and her relationship both to God and man. Minerva's conclusion is that Fortune is strongest, "Quhare lest foreknowing or intelligence/Is in the man" (st. 149), i.e., that man's will operates most freely when he acts under the governance of wisdom. And since the narrator, in spite of what he has learned, is still "wayke and feble" of wit (st. 149), Minerva dispatches him to Fortune. Since Book II of the *Consolation* is entirely taken up with Philosophy's injunctions against Fortune, Minerva's behavior here certainly requires explanation. Minerva, as we have seen, clearly states in st. 149, that the narrator is incapable of placing himself under her "governaunce," in part because of his intellectual deficiencies which are, as he himself had earlier suggested (st. 14), the natural consequence of his youth. But it is not merely his youth which makes him subject to Fortune. More importantly, it is his courtly desire for the young woman, a desire which is entirely sublunary, which prompts Minerva to return him to the earth whence he had come.

Returning to earth, the narrator is led by his guide, Good Hope, to the goddess Fortuna, the description of whom is perfectly traditional. She promises her aid (st. 170), but in attempting to help him mount the wheel she pulls him by the ear "so ernestly" that he awakens (st. 172). It is perhaps significant to note that the narrator awakens *before* he is able to climb on Fortune's wheel. What this seems to suggest is

22. Before taking leave of the rudderless boat motif, we ought to note the possibility that it was suggested by Philosophy's admonition in the *Consolation:* "Si ventis vela committeres, non quo voluntas peteret sed quo flatus impellerent, promoveres." II, prose 1, p. 176.

that the narrator has absorbed more of Minerva's wisdom than had been apparent in his conversation with her.

With only minor exceptions, the Boethian influence terminates at this point.[23] It has, however, served its purpose, first by universalizing the specific situation described in the poem and thereby providing for the poet the ideological framework within which the situation is to be interpreted. Further, and perhaps more important, it has suggested to the poet the rhetorical structure of the poem as a whole. Finally, it has given the poet the inspiration for one of the most finely wrought passages in Middle English poetry. Were we to eliminate all evidence of Boethian influence from *The Kingis Quair,* what remains would stand in the same relation to *The Kingis Quair* as *Il Filostrato* does to *Troilus and Criseyde,* a poem conventionally modish and sophisticated but episodic and flimsy as well. For James, as for Chaucer, the Boethian material adds dimension and weight to the narrative.

(ii) THE COURTLY CONTENT

If the basic situation of *The Kingis Quair* is Boethian, the means by which the situation is resolved are courtly. Although the narrator attributes his release from prison to Jupiter (st. 25), the deities he prays to and consults, Venus, Minerva, Fortune, are all goddesses; as is typical of courtly poetry, *The Kingis Quair* presents a situation in which women, or female personifications, occupy the positions of authority and exercise almost absolute control over the male suppliant. Once the narrator voluntarily places himself in the power of the young woman he has seen walking in the garden, his world, like that of the knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale,*[24] becomes one in which women are dominant.

It is instructive to examine the way in which James introduces this world into his poem. After the narrator's Boethian lament concerning his imprisonment (st. 26-30), he tells us that he went to the window "to se the warld and folk that went forby" (st. 30); this world, as we immediately discover, is a courtly one containing a garden within which is an arbor (sts. 31-32), whose sole inhabitant, a nightingale, sings "the ympnis consecrat off lufis use" (st. 33). Both literally and figuratively, the courtly world which the narrator sees from his window is

23. One of the more interesting of these occurs in the envoy (st. 194), in which the poet expresses the hope that the reader will "reule and . . . stere" his "tong" so that the faults of the poem "helit may ben here."

24. Although it is true that the knight enters the courtly world from one direction, and the narrator of *The Kingis Quair* from another, their experience in it are similar, both he and the narrator being entirely at the mercy of women, and both achieving freedom only through submission.

one from which he is excluded; and when other birds join the nightingale to sing the praises of love (st. 35), he begins to wonder whether love can, in fact, "oure hertes setten and unbynd" (st. 37), and, what is more important to him at this juncture, whether love can "bynd and louse, and maken thrallis free" (st. 39). His internal *débat* concerning the power of love is short-lived; in the very next stanza (i.e., 40) he sees "The fairest or the freschest ȝong[e] floure/That ever I sawe," and immediately surrenders his heart to her (st. 41).

Because he has been thinking about love in terms of its power to "bynd and louse," the narrator speculates that the young woman may be "god Cupidis owin princesse,/ . . cummyn . . . to louse me out of bond," or perhaps "verray nature the goddesse/That have depaynted with ȝour hevinly hand/This garden full of flouris" (st. 43). Both guesses are, as Von Hendy notes,[25] in part correct; the prisoner is to be freed by his love for the young woman, herself a kind of *dea ex horte* whose presence in the garden seems to some extent dependent upon the love song of the birds which immediately precedes it.

The description of the lady has been criticized by Speirs who says: "There is more life in the garden than in her; she is less deeply felt than the leafage of the trees."[26] But what the description lacks in spontaneity it gains in relevance. The jewels which the lady wears, pearls, emeralds, sapphires, etc. (st. 46) contrast with the natural beauty of the garden and sustain the narrator's doubts as to whether the lady is goddess or woman, or, if goddess, which one; the chaplet of plumes rather than the usual flowers, serves to emphasize and amplify the uncertainty of the narrator as to the nature of the young woman. When Speirs accuses her of seeming lifeless he is correct, but it must be asked whether "that impression of freshness, naturalness, and simplicity,"[27] which we get from Chaucer's description of Emily is really what James is after here. The glittering lady is, in a series of similes, likened to her natural surroundings, but the narrator's own confusion renders him incapable of turning the similes into metaphors, i.e., of identifying the lady as an actual young woman:

> Full of quaking spangis bryght as gold,
> Forgit of schap like to the amorettis,
> So new, so fresch, so pleasant to behold,
> The plumys eke like to the floure Ionettis,
> And othir of schap like to the [round crokettis],
> And, above all this, there was, wele I wote,
> Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote. (st. 47)

25. P. 144.

26. John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London, 1962), p. 35.

27. Speirs, p. 35.

The artificial ornaments which adorn the lady represent one kind of beauty, the flowers to which they are likened another, just as the lady herself, like a jewel in its setting, exhibits a kind of beauty different from that of the garden which surrounds her.

In the next stanza, the relationship between the narrator and the lady is established symbolically:

> About hir nek, quhite as the fyre amaille,
> A gudely cheyne of smale orfeuerye
> Quhareby there hang a ruby, without faille,
> Like to ane hert[e] schapin verily. . . . (st. 48)

The "gudely cheyne" is metaphorically the chain of love, referred to later in the poem (st. 183), and the heart-shaped ruby is, of course, a symbolic representation of the narrator's heart, freely offered to the lady and eventually accepted by her.[28] As though the symbol is, in some causal way, antecedent to the fact, the narrator's perception of the ruby is quickly followed by his decision that the lady is nature's child (st. 50) and therefore a "worldly creature" (st. 51) whose love is perhaps attainable by the usual means of prayer to Venus (st. 52). It is significant that once the lady's reality and mortality are established, the lapidarian images which had been used to describe her disappear from the poem and are replaced by references to her as a "floure" (e.g., st. 114) or rose (st. 186).[29]

The effect which the narrator's sudden consecration to love has on him is to make him perceive everything anew, and to interpret all that he sees in terms of his own deeply felt love for the beautiful young woman. Because love has come to him as a direct result of his having *seen* the lady in the garden, the narrator begins to scrutinize the garden more closely and to internalize what he sees there. The lady's hound, for example, which had been too insignificant to comment upon earlier now seems more blessed than he because of its proximity to its mistress: "'A! wele were him that now were In thy plyte!'" (st. 53). The silence of the nightingale he construes as a personal affront to his lady (st. 54), and chides the bird querulously (st. 54-59) for having "no mynde of lufe" (st. 58). In these stanzas, James delineates the extreme, almost comic, self-consciousness of the courtly lover for whom all of creation seems impervious to his plight but whose good offices he thinks it essential to secure.

28. Minerva later says to the narrator in "game": "I se wele by thy chere and contenance,/There is sum thing that lyis the on hert" (st. 167).

29. Speirs, who is usually a most perceptive reader of poetry, seems to have missed the point here. About the jewel imagery in general and the ruby in particular he says: "It is associated indeed with fire . . . but in other respects it is without symbolic significance" (p. 36).

one from which he is excluded; and when other birds join the nightingale to sing the praises of love (st. 35), he begins to wonder whether love can, in fact, "oure hertes setten and unbynd" (st. 37), and, what is more important to him at this juncture, whether love can "bynd and louse, and maken thrallis free" (st. 39). His internal *débat* concerning the power of love is short-lived; in the very next stanza (i.e., 40) he sees "The fairest or the freschest ȝong[e] floure/That ever I sawe," and immediately surrenders his heart to her (st. 41).

Because he has been thinking about love in terms of its power to "bynd and louse," the narrator speculates that the young woman may be "god Cupidis owin princesse,/ . . cummyn . . . to louse me out of bond," or perhaps "verray nature the goddesse/That have depaynted with ȝour hevinly hand/This garden full of flouris" (st. 43). Both guesses are, as Von Hendy notes,[25] in part correct; the prisoner is to be freed by his love for the young woman, herself a kind of *dea ex horte* whose presence in the garden seems to some extent dependent upon the love song of the birds which immediately precedes it.

The description of the lady has been criticized by Speirs who says: "There is more life in the garden than in her; she is less deeply felt than the leafage of the trees."[26] But what the description lacks in spontaneity it gains in relevance. The jewels which the lady wears, pearls, emeralds, sapphires, etc. (st. 46) contrast with the natural beauty of the garden and sustain the narrator's doubts as to whether the lady is goddess or woman, or, if goddess, which one; the chaplet of plumes rather than the usual flowers, serves to emphasize and amplify the uncertainty of the narrator as to the nature of the young woman. When Speirs accuses her of seeming lifeless he is correct, but it must be asked whether "that impression of freshness, naturalness, and simplicity,"[27] which we get from Chaucer's description of Emily is really what James is after here. The glittering lady is, in a series of similes, likened to her natural surroundings, but the narrator's own confusion renders him incapable of turning the similes into metaphors, i.e., of identifying the lady as an actual young woman:

> Full of quaking spangis bryght as gold,
> Forgit of schap like to the amorettis,
> So new, so fresch, so pleasant to behold,
> The plumys eke like to the floure Ionettis,
> And othir of schap like to the [round crokettis],
> And, above all this, there was, wele I wote,
> Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote. (st. 47)

25. P. 144.

26. John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London, 1962), p. 35.

27. Speirs, p. 35.

The artificial ornaments which adorn the lady represent one kind of beauty, the flowers to which they are likened another, just as the lady herself, like a jewel in its setting, exhibits a kind of beauty different from that of the garden which surrounds her.

In the next stanza, the relationship between the narrator and the lady is established symbolically:

> About hir nek, quhite as the fyre amaille,
> A gudely cheyne of smale orfeuerye
> Quhareby there hang a ruby, without faille,
> Like to ane hert[e] schapin verily. . . . (st. 48)

The "gudely cheyne" is metaphorically the chain of love, referred to later in the poem (st. 183), and the heart-shaped ruby is, of course, a symbolic representation of the narrator's heart, freely offered to the lady and eventually accepted by her.[28] As though the symbol is, in some causal way, antecedent to the fact, the narrator's perception of the ruby is quickly followed by his decision that the lady is nature's child (st. 50) and therefore a "worldly creature" (st. 51) whose love is perhaps attainable by the usual means of prayer to Venus (st. 52). It is significant that once the lady's reality and mortality are established, the lapidarian images which had been used to describe her disappear from the poem and are replaced by references to her as a "floure" (e.g., st. 114) or rose (st. 186).[29]

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The narrator begins his scolding of the bird by asking it to sing "For Venus sake" in order to "mak my lady chere" (st. 54). His reason for wanting the bird to resume singing is different, and less altruistic, in the next two stanzas:

> And eke I pray, for all the paynes grete
> That for the love of proigne thy sister dere,
> Thou sufferit quhilom, quhen thy brestis wete
> Were with the teres of thyn eyen clere
> All bludy ronne; that pitee was to here
> The crueltee of that unknyghtly dede,
> Quhare was fro the bereft thy maidenhede,
>
> Lift up thyne hert, and sing with gude entent,
> And in thy notis suete the treson telle,
> That to thy sister trewe and Innocent
> Was kythit by hir husband false and fell;
> For quhois gilt, as It is worthy wel,
> Chide thir husbandis that are false, I say,
> And bid thame mend, In the twenty devil way. (sts. 55-56)

In having the narrator ask the nightingale to sing of Procne, James demonstrates his skill in portraying both the narrator's anxiety and the devious way in which he tries to alleviate it. In the nightingale, the narrator recognizes a kindred spirit, one which has suffered for love. Its complaint, which he sees as being similar to his own, cannot help but move the lady to pity, if not for him, then at least for those who have suffered cruel treatment through no fault of their own. The reasons for the narrator's chiding then, as he makes clear in the next stanza ("O lytill wrecch, allace! maist thou noght se/Quho commyth 3ond?" st. 57), are first, to attract the lady's attention— perhaps by the sound of his own pleas should the bird remain silent (see st. 60, below)—, and second, to enlist her sympathy. The narrator, who had earlier tried pleas, now resorts to *ad avem* reproaches (st. 58) and cajolery (st. 59), but finally has to admit his helplessness:

> I thoght eke thus, gif I my handis clap,
> Or gif I cast, than will sche flee away;
> And gif I hold my pes, than will sche nap;
> And gif I crye, sche wate noght quhat I say;
> Thus, quhat is best, wate I noght be this day:
> "Bot blawe wynd, blawe, and do the levis schake,
> That sum twig may wag, and mak hir to wake." (st. 60)

The incantation is immediately successful, a precursor of the narrator's success in obtaining non-human aid later in the poem, and the nightingale bursts into a song (st. 61) which attracts other birds; their chorus inspires the narrator to add his courtly accompaniment: " 'Quhen sall 3our merci rew upon 3our man, / Quhois service is 3it uncouth unto 3ow?' " (st. 63). And the birds respond by stating their pleasure at

alludes briefly to physiological and psychological causes (¶ 3-5), and, on the question of how one can distinguish a divinatory from a non-divinatory dream, Macrobius is silent.

For the poet, then, Macrobius, in spite of his reputation as an authority on dreams,[35] could be of but limited assistance. To be sure, some of Macrobius's comments achieve literary prominence,[36] but for the most part, it is Macrobius's general concern with dreams, a concern which the poets exaggerated, rather than his specific observations about them which caused him to figure so prominently in medieval dream allegory.

Generally, the dream in *The Kingis Quair* follows the outline of the *Dream of Scipio*: the narrator is taken up into the heavens where he is instructed about his future conduct; having been advised, the dreamer awakens. Just as Scipio is told that "below the moon all is mortal and transitory" (IV, 3), the dreamer in *The Kingis Quair* must subject himself to Fortune's Wheel once he has returned to earth.

As for the kind of dream which is presented in *The Kingis Quair,* the information which would enable the dreamer, and the reader, to make any definitive classification is deliberately withheld until the dreamer has awakened. Thus, the significance of the dream is made known not in the dream itself, where it must necessarily be viewed with some suspicion, but in the waking world which the narrator inhabits.

The ambivalence of the narrator with regard to the dream is an extremely effective device for anticipating and deferring the correlative ambivalence of the reader. We are told, for example, that the dream takes place while the narrator is "amaisit verily,/ Half sleping and half suoun" (st. 73). The dream which follows does not in any way dispel the doubts which its occasion has raised; upon awakening, the narrator asks precisely the question which occurs to the reader: "Is this of my forethought impressioun/ Or is It from the hevin a visioun?" (st. 175).[37] The answer is given in the message delivered to the narrator

35. Stahl, pp. 41-42.

36. For example, in the *Nun's Priest's Tale,* Pertelote's suggestion to Chauntecleer that he purge himself is based on the Macrobian distinction between *somnium* and *insomnium,* the latter of which can be the result of overindulgence in eating and drinking (¶ 4).

37. In the *House of Fame* (1. 26), Chaucer reports that some men believe imprisonment itself is a cause of dreams.

by a turtle dove: "now lauch, and play, and syng,/ That art besid so glad an auenture;/ For In the hevyn decretit is the cure" (st. 179).[38]

As we have seen, the virtue which the narrator learns in the course of his dream is patience, the virtue taught to Boethius by Lady Philosophy. That James should choose to have this virtue expounded in the context of a Macrobian dream is evidence of his ability and willingness to synthesize material from diverse sources, a characteristic which will be more fully documented in the last part of this essay.[39]

(iv) THE CHAUCERIAN TREATMENT

That *The Kingis Quair* owes much to Chaucer has been recognized by virtually everyone who has studied it, and its three modern editors, Skeat, Lawson, and Mackenzie, have very carefully called attention to Chaucerian parallels and echoes in *The Kingis Quair.* Our understand-

38. It is tempting to see the turtle-dove as representative of a kind of love different from, and perhaps, opposed to, the variety of love reluctantly espoused by the nightingale earlier in the poem. However, such an interpretation is highly speculative, especially if one assumes with Carl E. Bain ("The Nightingale and the Dove in the *Kingis Quair," TSL,* IX [1964], 19-29) that because the nightingale is said to be the representative of Venus and, presumably, of courtly love, the dove must represent chastity and marriage (pp. 23-24). For this interpretation, Mr. Bain is obviously relying not upon the poem, which contains not a single reference to the narrator's marriage and which in face describes his realization of his love in terms which are explicitly courtly, but rather upon several highly questionable assumptions concerning the life of the putative author. The narrator, in describing how he came "to blisse with hir that is my souirane" (st. 181), refers to Venus, love's servants, and standing in a lady's grace (st. 184); to the dance of love (st. 185); and to love as "the rose" (st. 186) and the "floure" (st. 187, 192), courtly references all.

With regard to the birds, each is strictly functional rather than emblematic. The nightingale's song foreshadows the narrator's audience with Venus and, with regard to the young woman, betokens a love no different from that suggested in the dove's message. Just as the narrator had chided the nightingale ("me think thou gynnis slepe," st. 57), the dove now implores the narrator to "awak! awak!" (st. 179), and the courtly love which the narrator achieves is described in terms which echo the song of the birds (st. 64-65).

39. There are perhaps two instances in *The Kingis Quair* of direct Macrobian influence: 1) in his ascent to the sphere of Venus, the dreamer passes through each of the four elements (st. 76; cf. Macrobius, XI, ¶ 8-9); however, the order of the elements in *The Kingis Quair* is at odds with that in Macrobius, 2) James refers to "my buk in lynis sevin" (st. 197; cf. st. 187), and one of the most important personages in the poem is Minerva. Macrobius (VI, 11) says, "The reputation of virginity has so grown about the number seven that it is called Pallas. Indeed, it is regarded as a virgin because, when doubled it produces no number under ten, the later being the first limit of numbers. It is Pallas because it is born only from the multiplication of the monad, just as Minerva alone is said to have been born of one parent."

ing of the poem has improved substantially in this century, and it is no longer possible to say that James's use of Chaucer is mechanical.[40] However, no attempt has hitherto been made to examine these parallels in any detail, and, what is more important, no one has investigated James's explicitly Chaucerian treatment of even non-Chaucerian elements. It is with these problems that this section will deal.

The one poem of Chaucer's which James most clearly knew is the *Knight's Tale.*[41] Briefly the parallels between the narrator's first glimpse of the young woman in the garden and the first sight of Emily by Palamon and Arcite are as follows: 1) like Chaucer's knights (I/A/, 1042 ff.), the narrator arises early (st. 27); 2) like Arcite (1086) he attributes his imprisonment to Fortune (st. 29); 3) in both poems there is a garden visible from the window of the prison (1065-67; st. 30); 4) and in both there is a beautiful, young woman in the garden who is doing her "Observaunces" to May (1045 ff.; st. 34, 40); 5) the debate between Palamon and Arcite as to whether Emily is a goddess or woman (1101 ff.; Cf. also, *Troilus and Criseyde,* I, 425) is internalized by the narrator (st. 42-44); 6) who like the Theban knights is stricken with love at first sight (1077-79, 1112-16; st. 40); 7) like Emily, who has consecrated herself to Diana (2273 ff.), the young woman in *The Kingis Quair* is Nature's child (st. 50); 8) like Arcite and then Palamon (1155 ff.), the narrator realizes that the young woman is a "worldly creature" (st. 51), and since like Palamon he is to seek her love successfully, 9) he, like Palamon (2210 ff.), prays to Venus (st. 52) for aid. We might also note that whereas Palamon at first mistakes Emily for Venus (1112), the narrator suspects that the young woman may be "Cupidis owin princesse" (st. 40).

While these parallels are sufficient to indicate the close relationship between *The Kingis Quair* and the *Knight's Tale,* the similarities in technique are even more striking and are, I believe, of greater significance. It is generally agreed that Chaucer's most important departure from the *Teseid* is his addition of Boethian material; it has also been suggested that Chaucer's purpose in the *Knight's Tale* is to raise a

40. Henry Wood, "Chaucer's Influence upon King James I of Scotland as Poet," *Anglia,* III (1880), 223-65. P. 227. In addition to the Chaucerian parallels cited by the poem's editors, see J. C. Maxwell, "An Echo of Chaucer in *The Kingis Quair*'," *N&Q,* NS XI (1964), 172. Mr. Maxwell compares st. 137 and the *Clerk's Tale,* IV (E), 1164-66.

41. It has not to my knowledge been suggested that James also knew Chaucer's source, *Il Teseide.* Only a comparison of the *Teseide* and the relevant stanzas of *The Kingis Quair* would clarify the relationship between the two. Although such an examination lies beyond the scope of the present study, it certainly ought to be undertaken.

demande d'amour of the kind associated with the courts of love.[42] As we have seen, James attempts a fusion of Boethian and courtly elements in the Chaucerian manner, and his success is at least in part the result of Chaucer's similar fusion in the *Knight's Tale.*

After the *Knight's Tale,* the poem of Chaucer's with which James seems to have been most conversant is *Troilus and Criseyde.* Like the *Knight's Tale* and *The Kingis Quair, Troilus and Criseyde* combines courtly and Boethian elements, and the character of Troilus in the first two books is little different from that of Palamon. More particularly, the image of the steerless boat which James puts to such effective use is employed similarly in *Troilus and Criseyde* (I, 416-20; 969; V, 641), and, as James is to do, Chaucer provides for us a detailed allegorical explanation of this image (II, 1-7). The heart-shaped ruby worn by the young woman in *The Kingis Quair* (st. 48) is, as Lawson has noted,[43] strikingly similar to the brooch which Criseyde gives to Troilus:

> But wel I woot, a broche, gold and asure,
> In which a ruby set was lik an herte,
> Criseyde hym yaf, and stak it on hi sherte. (III, 1370-72)

As in *The Kingis Quair,* Macrobian dream-lore is prominent in *Troilus and Criseyde,* but perhaps the most significant correspondence between the two poems has to do with the way in which love is described in each. In medieval poetry generally, one often finds love described in terms of contradictory, even paradoxical, elements. Thus, in the English *Romaunt of the Rose,* we find the author, possibly Chaucer, describing love as follows:

> Love, it is an hatefull pees,
> A free acquitaunce, withoute relees,
> A trouthe, fret full of falsheede,
> A sikernesse all set in drede.
> In herte is a dispeiryng hope,
> And full of hope, it is wanhope;
> Wis woodnesse, and wod resoun;
> A swete perell, in to droun;

42. J. R. Hulbert, "What Was Chaucer's Aim in the Knight's Tale?" *SP,* XXVI (1929), 375-85.

43. *"The Kingis Quair" and "The Quare of Jelusy,"* ed. Alexander Lawson (London, 1910), st. 48 n.

An hevy birthen, lyght to bere;
A wikked wawe, awey to were. (4703-12)[44]

For another fifty-two lines, the poet in the person of "Raisoun," characterizes the paradoxical, and essentially dualistic, nature of love. The point which Jean de Meun and his redactor seem to be making is that no description of, or statement about, love is more nearly true than its opposite. There is no discussion of the oxymoronic nature of love in the *Romaunt.* We are not told, for example, whether love embodies these paradoxical qualities simultaneously or over a period of time, nor is any effort made to distinguish among various kinds of love. We have only a rhetorical exercise in which all attempts at description are inherently self-defeating. According to Raisoun, love is no less an indulgence of personal vanity than are attempts to explain it.

In *Troilus and Criseyde,* love is again described paradoxically, but Chaucer provides if not a resolution at least an explanation, possibly ironic, in Pandarus's doctrine of contraries. Pandarus tells Troilus "By his contrarie is every thyng declared" (I, 637), and goes on to say that "of two contraries is o lore" (I, 645). Thus, the theory of contraries is composed of two dependent propositions: 1) everything is "declared," i.e., made known and therefore understood, by its contrary, 2) of two contraries there is "o lore," i.e., a single resolution or moral.

Although the theory is stated briefly, opportunities for its practical application are virtually unlimited, since contraries in *Troilus and Criseyde* appear frequently and in almost inconceivable variety. In reading the poem we come upon pleonastic contraries (e.g., "up and down," V, 432 *et passim*), proverbial contraries (e.g., "wulf ful" and "wether hool," IV, 1374), contraries having to do with topography ("valeye" and "hil," I, 950) and horticulture ("wedes wikke" and 'holsom herbes," I, 946-47). The largest category contains those pairs of opposites which relate directly to the central concern of the poem, the love of Troilus for Criseyde. Thus Pandarus tells Troilus that "joie is next the fyn of sorwe" (I, 952); Troilus, "as do thise lovers," finds

44. The French is:

Amour si est paix haineuse,
Amour est haine amoureuse,
C'est loyaulté la desloyalle,
C'est la desloyaulté loyalle,
C'est la paour toute asseurée;
Esperance desesperée;
C'est raison toute forcenable,
C'est doulx peril à soy noyer,
C'est fois legier à paumoyer . . .

"Le Roman de la Rose," Par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun dit clopinel . . ., ed. l'abbé Lenglet du Fresnoy, 3 v. (Paris, 1737), I, 4397-4406.

himself "bitwixen hope and derk desesperaunce" (II, 1306-07), and later oscillates between "hope and drede" (V, 1207); Criseyde tells Troilus that she will turn all his bitterness to sweetness (III, 179); and Troilus is forced to accept "newe sorwe" in place of his "joies olde" (V, 558).

In addition to the purely descriptive use of contraries which are dependent upon the structural device of antithesis, and which, because they ultimately derive from the concept of Fortune's wheel, are consecutive, we also find instances in which both contraries are simultaneously operative, their simultaneity being indicated by the use of either oxymoron (e.g., Pandarus's "I have a joly wo, a lusty sorwe"; II, 1099) or paradox (e.g., the description of the Trinity and of the Virgin mother in the last stanza of the poem; V, 1863-69).

When we turn to *The Kingis Quair,* we find that the paradoxical nature of love is once again treated in terms of contraries. The narrator's free thralldom, for example, is anticipated by Troilus's statement: "For myn estat roial I here resigne/ Into hire hond, and with ful humble chere/ Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere" (I, 432-34).[45] More specifically, the simultaneity of love's contraries is indicated by the narrator, whose appraisal of his condition is somewhat similar to the complaints of Troilus:

> How may this be, that deth and lyf, bothe tweyne,
> Sall bothe atonis in a creature
> Togidder duell, and turment thus nature?
>
> I may noght ellis done bot wepe and waile,
> With-In thir cald[e] wallis thus I-lokin;
> From hennesfurth my rest is my trauaille;
> My drye thrist with teris sall I slokin,
> And on my-self bene al my harmys wrokin:
> Thus bute is none, bot venus, of hir grace,
> Will schape remede, or do my spirit pace. (st. 68-69)

After comparing himself with Tantalus (cf. *Troilus and Criseyde,* III, 593; *Book of the Duchess,* 708; *Boece,* III, m. 12, l. 38), the narrator goes on to say that the effect of his complaint is such

> That turnyt is my strength In febilnesse,
> My wele in wo, my frendis all in fone,
> My lyf in deth, my lyght into dirknesse,
> My hope in feere, in dout my sekirnesse,
> Sen sche is gone: and god mote hir conuoye,
> That me may gyde to turment and to loye. (st. 71)

45. We are told also that the "fyr of love" held Troilus "as his thral lowe in destresse" (I, 439).

And Venus uses antithesis to point out to the narrator how unworthy he is of the lady's love:

> And ȝit, considering the nakitnesse
> Bothe of thy wit, thy persone, and thy myght,
> It is no mache, of thyne vnworthynesse
> To hir hie birth, estate, and beautee bryght:
> Als like ȝe bene, as day is to the nyght;
> Or sek-cloth is vnto fyne cremesye;
> Or doken to the fresche dayeseye.
>
> Vnlike the mone Is to the sonne schene;
> Eke Ianuarye is [vn]like to may;
> Vnlike the cukkow to the phylomene;
> Thaire tabartis ar noght bothe maid of array;
> Vnlike the crow is to the pape-Iay;
> Vnlike, In goldsmythis werk, a fischis eye
> To preise with perll, or maked be so heye. (st. 109-10)

It is perilously easy to call James's use of contraries conventional without recognizing the origins of the conventions, in English poetry at least, in Chaucer. In *Troilus and Criseyde,* Chaucer, as in his various discussions of dreams, once again provides a theoretical explanation ("By his contrarie is every thyng declared") together with its practical application, and once again applies an idea drawn from Boethius[46] to a situation which is patently courtly. It is precisely this process which James imitates in *The Kingis Quair,* and which explains his reference to Chaucer as one of his "maisteris dere" (st. 197). For James, Chaucer is a teacher not a repository, and therefore his indebtedness to Chaucer resides chiefly in the techniques which Chaucer has taught him rather than in specific passages or motifs in Chaucer which can be borrowed,[47]

46. Philosophy says, "And of thise thinges, certes, everich of hem is declared and schewed by others. For so as good and yvel ben two contraries, yif so be that good be stedfast, thanne scheweth the feblesse of yvel al opynly; and if thow knowe clerly the freelnesse of yvel, the stedfastness of good is knowen." Chaucer's *Boece,* IV, prose 2.

47. Although, as we have seen, James's indebtedness to Chaucer does at times extend to these smaller aspects. Instances can perhaps also be adduced from *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (ante 1410) which for quite some time was erroneously ascribed to Chaucer. With the narrator's ambivalence in *The King's Quair* concerning the nature of his dream (st. 73) we might compare the following: "And the delyt ther-of I wot never how,/I fel in suche a slomber and a swow,/Not al a-slepe, ne fully wakinge" (*C&N,* ed. Skeat in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces* [Oxford, 1897], 11. 86-88). And when the narrator warns the nightingale that "sum bird may cum and stryve/ In song with the, the maistry to purchace" (st. 59), he may be referring obliquely to the cuckoo's role in the *C&N* (cf. *The Kingis Quair,* st. 110 in which Venus cites the cuckoo and the nightingale as being opposites).

and especially in the application of Boethian doctrine to the situations and concerns of courtly poetry. Undoubtedly James would have agreed with Usk's description of Chaucer as "the noble philosophical poete in Englissh."[48]

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48. Thomas Usk, "Testament of Love" in ***Chaucerian and Other Pieces***, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), III, iv, 249.